(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the efforts being made by Government to provide adequate supply of wheat and mustard seeds to the States under the National Food Security Mission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has been continuously reviewing the need for import of wheat and edible oils to ensure adequate availability and stable prices. About 7 million tons of wheat was imported by the public sector agencies during the last two years to take care of the needs of the Public Distribution System, Welfare Schemes, natural calamities, buffer stock etc. Government is also considering subsidized distribution of imported edible oils to benefit consumers, in particular, those belonging to BPL families through the State Governments.

(c) To provide adequate supply of wheat seeds. The National Food Security Mission (NFSM) envisages distribution of seeds at incentivized price, provide small kits of 5 kilogram seeds to some farmers for demonstration purposes and frontline demonstration of new varieties of seeds. Distribution of mustard seeds is not covered under NFSM.

Urban-Centric Economic Growth

2374. SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the boom in real estate, the stock market and credit driven consumption are only urban-centric; and

(b) if so, the steps being contemplated by Government to boost domestic rural development driven consumption in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) Yes, Sir. There has been an all round growth in the real estate, stock market and credit driven consumption in the economy, some of which is perhaps more urban-centric than rural.

(b) The Government has taken several steps and are proposing some other to boost rural incomes and consumption in the country. These include the launching of the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) with a view to rejuvenate agriculture and improve farm incomes. In the budget proposal for 2008-09, the Government has announced a number of fiscal measures, including adjustments in personal income tax slabs, reduction in excise rates on a range of consumer goods, waiver of farm loans, all of which are likely to spur consumption in the farm and non-farm sectors of the rural economy. The extension of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to all districts of the country is also expected to contribute to an increase in consumption demand and, hence, growth in rural areas of the economy.

Recommendations of Committee on Financial inclusion

2375. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:

SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a slew of measures to boost financial inclusion, taking off from the recommendation of the Committee on Financial inclusion;

(b) whether Government would look into procedural changes like simplifying mortgage requirement and exemption from stamp duty for loans to small and marginal farmers as suggested by the Committee;

(c) whether some States have waived stamp duty on loans to farmers;

(d) whether Government is considering that there has to be uniform treatment for farmers across the country; and

(e) the steps being taken by the Government to bring uniform treatment for farmers across the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) The Committee on Financial Inclusion, headed by Shri C. Rangarajan, has submitted its final report to the Government of India (GoI). Meanwhile, based on the recommendations of the interim report of this Committee, the GoI has already taken a number of steps for implementation of this report. One of the important steps has been to constitute the Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) for meeting the cost of promotional and developmental interventions and the Financial Inclusion Technology Fund (FITF) for meeting the cost of technology adoption, with an overall corpus of Rs. 500 crore each, with initial funding of Rs. 25 crore to be contributed by the GoI, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in the ratio of 2:2:1.

Besides, pursuant to the announcement in the Union Budget 2008-09, Government has advised RBI to suitably advise the commercial banks to add at least 250 rural household accounts every year at each of their rural and semi-urban branches and to allow individuals such as retired bank officers, ex-servicemen etc. to be appointed as Business Facilitators or Business Correspondents or Credit Counselors. NABARD has already advised Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) to add at least 250 rural household accounts per rural/semi urban branch, every year.

(b) to (e) The Government, in recent years, have initiated several measures in consultation with RBI and NABARD to ensure timely and affordable credit to farmers through banks. These, *inter-alia,* include : (i) waiver of margin/security norms for agricultural loans upto Rs. 50,000/-, and in case of loans for agri-clinics and agri-businesses upto Rs. 5 lakh; (ii) bringing about procedural simplifications; and (iii) financing of oral lessees and landless agricultural labourers through the Self Help Group and Joint Liability Group approach.

GDP growth during 2008-09

2376. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Economic Advisory Council predicted GDP to be around 8.5 per cent during 2008-09;

(b) if so, whether Government would advise the industry to make adjustments due to pressure on rupee to appreciate, through productivity improvements and tapping domestic market instead of focusing on exports; and